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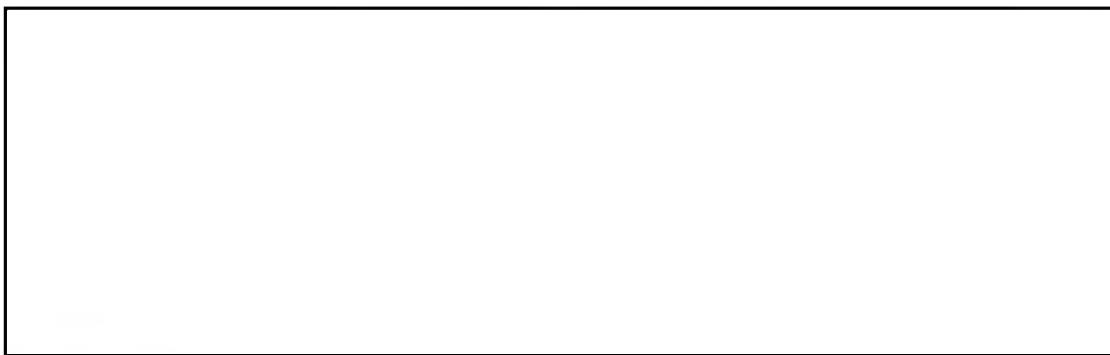
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Office of Current Intelligence

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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DOS review(s) completed.

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SOVIET UNION

1. Propaganda build-up of Malenkov begins:

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The American Embassy in Moscow reports indications already appearing of an effort to build up Malenkov's prestige. Pravda on 10 March printed a picture of Stalin, Mao, and Malenkov at the 1950 signing of the Sino-Soviet Treaty. A comparison with the original shows that a wholesale retouching job has placed Malenkov next to Mao by eliminating three persons between them. The original has also been trimmed to remove Molotov at Stalin's right hand and Vyshinsky seated in front of Mao.

The 9 March Pravda featured quotations from Malenkov's report at the 19th Party Congress in heavy black type similar to that used in quotations from Stalin.

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SOUTHEAST ASIA

3. Viet Minh attack against northern Laos indicated:

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French intelligence believes that Viet Minh reconnaissance activities indicate preparation for an attack on Sam Neua in northern Laos. Two divisions would probably be employed as the striking force, with an additional division in support.

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Since the threat to Sam Neua in January, French Union defenses there have reportedly been strengthened by the construction of a ring of fortresses around the town and improvement of the airfield. However, an enemy task force of the size indicated would far outnumber the French Union forces stationed there.

Such a Viet Minh objective may be a step toward the eventual establishment of a large "liberated area" including northern Laos which would be relatively immune to French ground action.

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NEAR EAST - AFRICA

5. Comment on Italian court decision on Iranian oil:

The decision of the Venice court on 11 March that the Italian company, SUPOR, had legally purchased the oil carried on the Miriella provides Prime Minister Mossadeq with an opportunity to obtain popular support for any line he may choose to take in the Anglo-Iranian oil talks.

Although the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company announced that it would take the case to a court in Rome, Mossadeq can use the Venice decision as evidence that the British "blockade" is broken. SUPOR intends to move more oil from Abadan; the Miriella transited the Suez Canal eastbound on 28 February. Other potential purchasers, who have been deterred by threats of British legal action, may now be encouraged to buy.

Iran's financial position will not be improved substantially by the relatively small amounts of oil which might be sold through a series of small contracts.

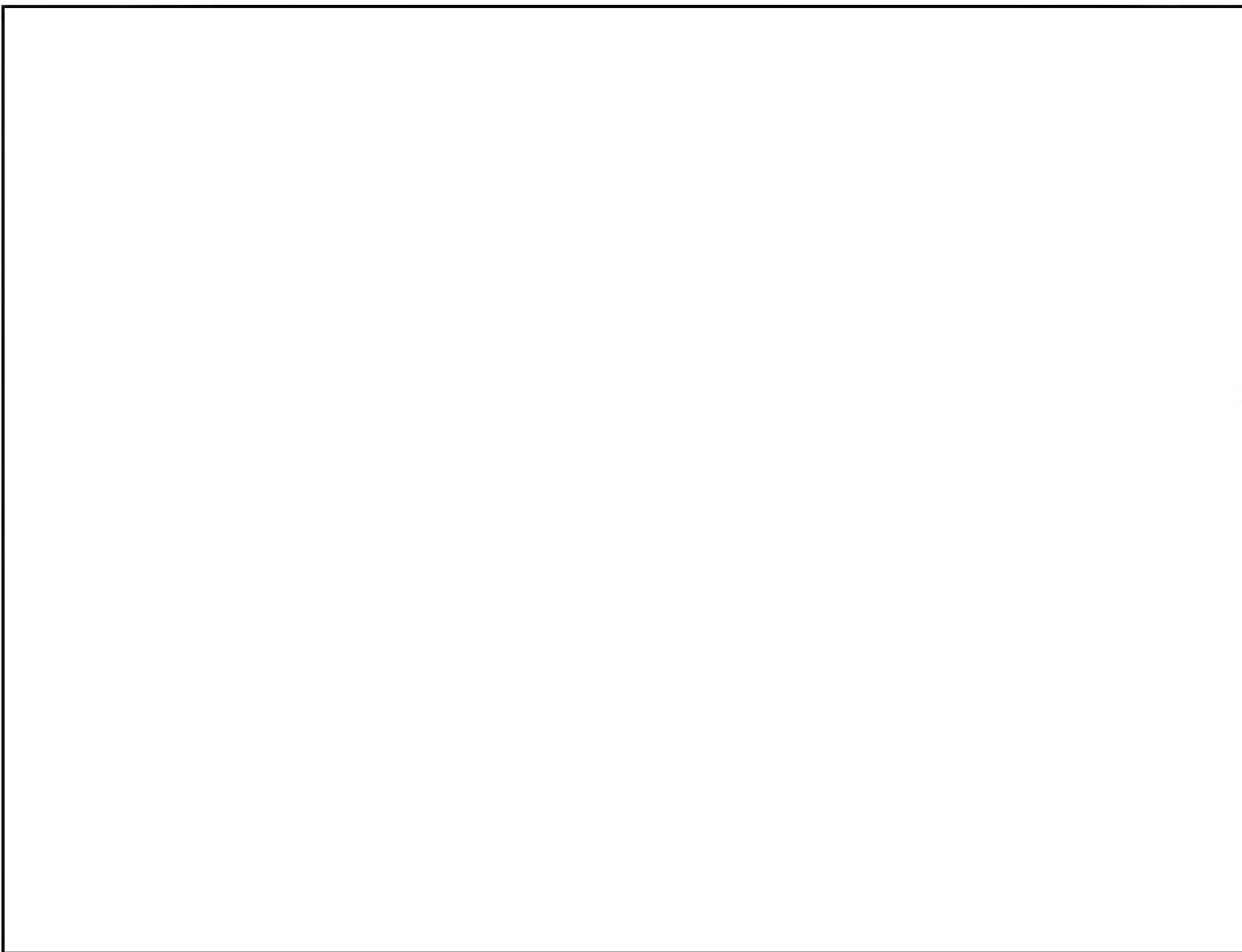
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7. Turkey presses Iraq for commitment on MEDO:

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According to the Turkish Charge in Baghdad, Turkey expects an official response to its 28 February proposal to Iraq that the two countries associate in establishing MEDO.

He was told by the Iraqi Foreign Minister that this matter was being considered by the Council of Ministers in Baghdad.

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The Charge stressed Turkey's role as the leader of Middle East defense, and re-emphasized his country's desire to have MEDO headquarters on Turkish soil. He said that any suggestion that the headquarters be located in Egypt would be unacceptable to Turkey for reasons of prestige as well as defense.

Comment: The Charge's remarks, apparently reflecting official thinking, are the clearest indication of Turkey's current disagreement with Western estimates of Egypt's importance to Middle East defense. Iraq, on the other hand, would prefer to follow Egypt's lead in joining MEDO.

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